

Assessments; Estimates; Goals and Priorities; Strategies; and Progress Reports - Results of Comprehensive Stateside Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities and Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs

State Unified Plan

The Designated State Units (DSU)'s in South Dakota submit this attachment to the "Needs Assessment" section of the State Unified Plan. The public vocational rehabilitation agencies in South Dakota are submitting attachment 4.11(a) with the state plan update to reflect that a comprehensive statewide needs assessment has been accomplished with this plan submission. As a partner in the State Unified Plan, public vocational rehabilitation has conducted an assessment of the needs of all individuals with disabilities as per the Needs Assessment section of the State Unified Plan and the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act and state plan requirements. Public vocational rehabilitation includes workforce partners in this assessment process to assure that the workforce needs of the state to include individuals with disabilities was addressed. This assessment included the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with most significant disabilities, individuals with disabilities who have been unserved and underserved and all components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System.

Sources of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

The Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities and the need to establish, develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs is derived for a variety of sources. These sources are summarized to identify the needs of the individuals with disabilities in this state plan. With this information, the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division) and the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation are working on developing new goals and strategies for the State Plan attachments 4.11(c)(1) and 4.11(d). The sources of this information consist of:

- Comprehensive statewide needs survey during FFY 2004
- Consumer satisfaction surveys done annually;
- Survey of Community Rehabilitation Programs;
- Annual public meetings;
- Focus groups meetings with consumers and providers;
- Annual case file reviews;
- Conferences and seminars;
- Board and SILC strategic planning sessions;
- Medicaid Infrastructure Grant and Council;
- Involvement and participation on boards such as Work Force Development Council; Career Planning Council; Council on Developmental Disabilities; Special Education Council; Mental Health Advisory Board; and Consumer Organizations.

The public vocational rehabilitation program also collects, reviews, and recommends improvements to needs assessments performed by other partners in both the workforce investment system and public agencies who work with and provide programming to individuals with disabilities. This oversight and review is intended to coordinate services and systems statewide for individuals with disabilities.

The Needs Of Individuals With Disabilities Who Have The Most Significant Disabilities, Including Their Need For Supported Employment Services

“Individual with a Most Significant Disability” means an individual with a disability who meets the criteria for having a significant disability and *in addition* has serious limits in two or more functional capacities (such as, but not limited to, mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome. Individuals who meet the criteria for this Priority Level I category are determined to be individuals with the “Most Significant Disability”.

Findings of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment for individuals with the most significant disabilities consist of:

Strengths:

- Transition Projects to include Project Skills, Transition Services Liaison Project, Youth Leadership Forum, Regional Forums, Teacher training sessions, and Catch the Waive
- Staff low turnover, training opportunities, staff experience, counselor education and the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
- Co-location and partnerships with other WIA partners
- Case Management System (VR FACES) and Division’s ability to meet the performance indicators
- Availability of public and private providers
- Flexibility in agency and availability of services
- Development of Benefits Specialists Initiative
- Effective and knowledgeable State Rehabilitation Advisory Council

Needs:

- Need for continued coordinated services between systems and agencies
- Initiatives for dealing with ruralness of South Dakota
- Need to improve success rate for SSA Recipients
- Improved provider relations for long term supports
- Increased opportunities for more community based assessments and work experiences
- Services to be more community based
- Increased availability of providers; and continued training for service providers
- Need to increase consumer earnings
- Need to improve retention of employment strategies that may include follow-up strategies
- Need to continue to develop employer relationships and be more creative on NDEAM activities
- Need to develop succession planning as staff retire
- Need to decrease high caseloads per counselor
- Need to develop alternative funding resources such as PASS, SSA and Schools
- Need to provide more upfront counseling with consumers to include the perception of the purpose of SSA benefits.
- Need to provide more training to employers, consumers and schools.

The Division has and continues to make great strides in addressing the needs of the findings of the comprehensive assessment for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Goals #3, #8, and #11 in FFY 2007 Attachment 4.12(c)(1) and their corresponding strategies in attachment 4.12(d) are specifically addressing this target group. Our accomplishments are summarized in attachment 4.11(e) with some of the most significant accomplishments listed below:

- Spinal Cord/Traumatic Brain Injury Research Fund was established in 2004
- Paid work experiences being provided for students with disabilities and individuals being served through community mental health centers
- Converting state and provider positions from segregated training to community based systems.
- Private provider system has increased availability of service options and choices.
- Providing accident insurance coverage and fee structure for situational assessments has more than tripled the use of situational assessments.
- Specialized services for individuals who are blind/visually impaired, mental health impairments, development disability, or have a traumatic brain injury.
- Training provided three times a year for providers.
- Policy developed on the coordination of services between the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Mental Health.
- The provision of on-going training and technical assistance through a jointly funded project between the public Vocational Rehabilitation Programs and the State Department of Special Education.
- Improved community relations and employer incentives.
- Development of Benefits Specialists positions to be available for every district office.

The Needs Of Individuals With Disabilities Who Are Minorities And Have Been Unserved Or Underserved

The largest minority group in South Dakota involves American Indians from several tribes, making up approximately 8% (8.3 according to 2000 U.S. Census data) of the state's total population. DRS has initiated a number of activities to address serving all eligible individuals, regardless of race or ethnicity. This section identifies the needs and the actions that the Division has taken and will continue to take to ensure minorities (especially American Indians) with disabilities have equal access to Vocational Rehabilitation services.

The results of a state-wide needs assessment involving 5.6% of respondents were identified as American Indian (an increase from 3.7% from the previous 1996 comprehensive needs assessment) and indicated specific service needs of American Indians with disabilities. Issues that specifically impact individuals from minority backgrounds who are unserved or underserved include:

- Transportation – lack of public transit on American Indian Reservations requires that Vocational Rehabilitation provide for transportation to access services.
- Communications – Many American Indians do not have access to the internet or even telephones making communication difficult.
- Access to medical services – Indian Health Services are available on Reservations and Tribal lands but these facilities are often understaffed and do not have the latest in medical technology or medical specialists to provide treatment. Vocational Rehabilitation services include transportation and maintenance to urban areas for needed treatment as part of Individual Plans for Employment.
- There are limited job opportunities on the states Reservations leading to challenges for job development and job placement.

The Division has developed strategies for addressing the identified needs including training for VR counselors in providing options for self-employment for eligible American Indians and collaboration with the 121 projects and the Native American Independent Living Center in South Dakota. Other initiatives

resulting from the comprehensive statewide needs assessment involve the provision of more culturally sensitive services for American Indians and other minorities with disabilities. Following is a summary of significant activities identified in attachment 4.11 (e) (2) (Goal #9):

- Continued cooperation with the 121 Native American Projects in South Dakota. DRS has cooperative agreements with all the 121s and a DRS staff member is assigned as the liaison between the two agencies.
- The Division continues to recruit individuals from minority backgrounds for counseling and other positions in the agency.
- The Division invites the 121 Native American Programs to conferences or other training sessions sponsored by the Division.
- In-service training needs assessments include the 121 Native American Programs.
- Employees and consumers of DRS participate in the Native American Summit to learn strategies for addressing cultural issues when serving South Dakotans of American Indian heritage.
- The Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) awarded the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired the “Eagle Partnership Award” in May of 2005, in appreciation of devoted service to the CANAR mission to improve the quality of life for American Indians with disabilities.

DRS has taken the following additional steps to assure equal access to American Indians with disabilities and individuals with disabilities from other minority groups:

- SRC membership includes an American Indian representative of the 121 projects.
- DRS counselor manual includes specific guidance on providing culturally sensitive services to American Indians with disabilities.
- DRS staff have done outreach activities on American Indian reservations during promotion of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.
- The Division has been providing training and technical assistance to schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- The Division continues working with the 121 Native American programs to update the cooperative agreements to better coordinate services between our two agencies.
- Sioux Falls is experiencing an increase in individuals with cultural diversity. DRS has made arrangements with Lutheran Social Services for foreign language interpreting.

These activities ensure participation of citizens who have disabilities and have minority backgrounds that they will continue to be a priority for the Division and the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation. In addition to those of American Indian descent, we are also experiencing an increased demand for services from individuals of minority backgrounds from a variety of other diverse cultures.

The Needs Of Individuals With Disabilities Who Are Served Through Other Components Of The Statewide Workforce Investment System.

South Dakota has a comprehensive and coordinated public and private statewide workforce investment system. There is a partnership of agencies and employer resources under the guidance of the South Dakota Workforce Development Council. Public vocational rehabilitation is represented on the State Workforce Council and State Workforce Council members are appointed to the state rehab councils. In addition to the methods of identifying needs described elsewhere in this attachment, DRS personnel

partner with the state workforce system on local workforce boards, and by attending and presenting at statewide workforce conferences. Public vocational rehabilitation analyzes employment trends and labor market demands as an agency represented on the South Dakota Career Council. Annually, DRS participates with WIA on follow-up studies as to placements, retention, and wages. All of these initiatives allow DRS to guide services and resources in higher demand job areas as well as fields that will provide good wages and careers.

This comprehensive workforce system has allowed DRS to identify and plan in three critical areas concerning employment of individuals with significant disabilities, including eligible consumers of public vocational rehabilitation. U.S. Department of Labor has substantially cut WIA funding to South Dakota over the course of the past four years. Result is that notification has been given that funding for the Career Learning Center system will discontinue on June 30, 2007. DRS is a prime agency participant on a public/private task force that is developing and implementing alternative vocational training and placement programs and processes across the state. The expertise of DRS is essential in assuring employment and training needs related to disability continue to be met after this Career Learning Center system discontinues.

A significant need for individuals who are served through the workforce investment system is the coordination of services and funding with the vocational rehabilitation program. Because of this need, the South Dakota public vocational rehabilitation programs and the Department of Labor issued a joint memorandum to the Vocational Rehabilitation offices, One-Stop Career Centers, and the Career Learning Centers. This memorandum addressed the confusion regarding the level of services available when funded through the WIA.

As is detailed in Attachment 4.11 (c) (3), DRS is implemented an Order of Selection on October 1, 2006. In the extensive preparations for this significant implementation, DRS has worked closely with all of the key components of the statewide workforce system to determine how individuals impacted by the order of selection may be served by other workforce system partners. Focus groups, advisory council meetings, and guidance from the Workforce Development Council have contributed to DRS notification and training efforts. Individuals with disabilities will have opportunities to receive similar employment and training services from other components of the workforce system to a degree substantially greater than before this critical issue became necessary. This needs identification and subsequent intervention will allow DRS to place a higher priority on serving individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Assessment of the need to establish, develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs

The needs of the community rehabilitation programs have been on training and technical assistance in improving their programs and services for community based services. To better assess these needs, the South Dakota community rehabilitation programs participated in a needs assessment completed in December, 2004. The key areas with the greatest needs identified from this survey and other sources (identified at the beginning of this document) consist of:

- Job development and employer relations;
- Employment for individuals with mental illness;
- Transition from school to work;
- Workplace analysis, job analysis, and task analysis;
- Social Security Work Incentives; and

- Career Planning

The Division and the Region VIII CRP RCEP at CTAT provides an annual competency training for providers. This week long training continually have 25-35 providers in attendance and address all of the items of need addressed above. In addition, the Division invites providers to attend the annual Mid-Winter conference and the annual Fall Conference. Topics for these conferences include some of the items of needs identified above. The Division provides, sponsor other trainings are provided regionally from agency staff, or the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant.

DRS continually assesses the need to establish, develop and improve community rehabilitation programs via all of the methods described throughout attachment 4.11 (a). Among the need areas being addressed with significant additional development at this time include:

1. expansion of services to rural and remote areas by the continued certification of private providers who meet DRS qualification levels for job placement and job coaching services
2. expansion of Project Skills contracts that now cover every school district in the state to provide paid employment to transition age students as part of their IEP and section 504 vocational rehabilitation plans.
3. enhancement and improvement of the Transition Liaison Services project that provides expanded transition services to transition age students involved in Special education and vocational rehabilitation
4. expansion of assistive technology service delivery system to increase timeliness of access to assessments and assistive devices to all individuals on a statewide basis to enhance employment and earnings potential to all consumers served by the vocational rehabilitation program. Fee for service system established by DRS in AT program development allows all programs that serve individuals with disabilities access to AT services. This includes all school district, independent living centers, Native American rehabilitation programs, and other disability service providers in the state.

The above four examples represent a snapshot of community rehabilitation program development and improvement of community rehabilitation programs in DRS. The continuing need to establish, develop, and improve community rehabilitation programs is addressed in the development of goals and strategies of this state plan.

Goals and Strategies

Findings from the statewide needs assessment and a number of other activities are utilized to identify goals and strategies to improve services. Goals and priorities are addressed in attachment 4.11(c)(1) through a number of activities planned with input elicited from the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, consumers of services and other partners in vocational rehabilitation. Strategies are addressed attachment 4.11(d). In addition to the statewide needs assessment, the following activities are instrumental in developing appropriate state goals and priorities and strategies for use of Title I funds in innovation and expansion activities:

- Consumer Satisfaction Surveys;
- Public Meetings;
- Focus Groups;
- Case file reviews;

- Conferences and Seminars;
- Board Strategic Planning Sessions.

The results reported for the state wide needs assessment for this state plan submission have been analyzed and goals/strategies developed to address identified needs. Future state plan updates will address results from activities that provide information pertinent to goals and priorities and strategies to address innovation and expansion activities. Collaboration between the State Workforce Investment Council, Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Statewide Independent Living Council and other entities in the workforce, education and social service systems will occur to ensure continuity of policies and procedures for service provision.